

SAVE SHARKS BY BOYCOTTING ITS MEAT, SAYS MARINE EXPERT



Dr Aazani Mujahid

KUCHING: It is not only shark fin that the public should boycott to save its population, as shark meat has also been known to be served as a condiment in Sarawak's famous Kolo Mee dish.

According to marine life expert Dr Aazani Mujahid, shark meat is easily available in the market due to demand.

"You can always see fresh sharks at the fish market, dried sharks and even salted shark meat. Do you think that by not consuming its fins will help preserve the shark population in the ocean? I beg to differ," she said in a statement.

The Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (Unimas) Science and Resource Technology lecturer made reference to the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) for Nature Malaysia #myfinmylife campaign, which aims to reverse the present scenario of high shark fin consumption in the country by engaging the public and businesses to unanimously pledge not to consume shark-fin soup and products.

The campaign also looks to sensitise 20,000 restaurants to phase out shark-fin soup from their menu, while engaging one million Malaysians to support the call for no shark-fin soup.

For a start, it would immediately commit 500 businesses to remove shark-fin from their menu.

According to WWF Malaysia there are at least 63 species of sharks found in our waters. Among the commonly sighted includes blacktip reef shark (*carcharhinus melanopterus*), whitetip reef shark (*triaenodon obsus*) and tawny nurse shark (*nebrius ferrugineus*).

“Tawny nurse sharks are the ones we commonly see in the market. These sharks are common inshore bottom dwelling species found in tropical waters like Malaysia and they are very vulnerable these days.

“Maybe the fins will be sold to the highest bidder but I believe most of these sharks will end up in someone’s dish. It doesn’t necessarily need to be a restaurant,” Aazani added.

She suggested that holistic approach should be used for different regions because of the cultural differences and taking into account the local norms would help improve the effort.

“To be fair to the fishing community, they may not hunt for sharks but there are incidences where the sharks could be among the fishes tangled in their nets. For many fisherman, a catch is always a catch, regardless of the species,” she said.